

Our Ref: E5/AM/sp

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Isle of Wight County Press Annual Statement to IPSO - 2016

Overview of Regulated Entity

The Isle of Wight County Press is a locally owned, totally independent weekly newspaper for the Isle of Wight. It currently sells around 25,000 copies per week. It has a main website iwcp.co.uk, which regularly has more than 200,000 unique users and 3 million-plus page impressions per month.

Apart from an annual Holiday News tourist publication, and various in-paper supplements, this is our sole publication.

The Isle of Wight is an English county with its own unitary authority. It has a population of around 144,000.

I, Alan Marriott, editor, am the newspaper's responsible person, with Rachael Rosewell, my deputy, as back up and training officer.

Our editorial standards

The County Press adheres to the editor's code of conduct and does its level best to ensure everything published is fair and accurate. As a news team living in a hot-house environment of an island community, we certainly hear about it if we get something wrong.

We deal with all minor and in-house complaints in a responsible manner, with all but the simplest spelling error being referred to editor or deputy.

More serious complaints are dealt with in a more composed fashion, with evidence from reporter and complainant being weighed. We are not afraid to admit our errors, and to put them right in a measured way.

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For instance, we have a For the Record column, for simple corrections and clarifications, which is always on page four.

But, if we have made an error in something such as a wedding report, we are likely to, in addition, send the couple several copies of the corrected report, and sometimes re-run the report in full.

In the rare instances we cannot come to an agreement with the complainant, we will always give them IPSO's details for them to make a formal complaint.

Our highly experienced team of sub-editors, news editors and section editors query stories all the time, with the reporters given a clear brief that they should not just go on one person's word for a claim of wrong doing etc. Again the benefit of working and living in our patch for a long time brings a real "nose" for what can be trusted or not.

The IW County Press did not seek pre-publication guidance from IPSO in 2016, but regularly speak to the editorial law team at the NMA, who provide not only legal but ethical guidance.

Complaints-handling procedure

Our complaints handling procedure is largely informal at the first point of contact. Being a very local organisation, with an office in the centre of Newport, the county town, people often come in to comment or complain. We take complaints via the phone and there is a contact us button on our website, which often elicits comments.

I also have to reply to complaints from people posting comments about stories on our website, but this is often refereeing disputes between commenters.

We do have a complaints form, which I have not had to use yet as our normal systems seem to do the job well enough.

As previously stated, complaints are dealt with at a senior level and reporters are not encouraged to try to resolve them themselves. I feel that a senior voice is a calming influence on situations, and can be seen as more objective.

If we feel a minor complaint is justified, we will usually offer a simple correction or clarification in our For the Record column. A more major error will probably result in a follow-up story to rectify things, or in the most serious of cases, a correction and apology in a prominent position in the paper. Thankfully these are very rare.

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We provide readers with information about how to lodge a complaint, and about our membership of IPSO, on page 2 of our paper each week (attached). This has also recently been added to the Contact Us section on our website.

We have just issued guidance to editorial staff about how to deal with a complaint, using the guidelines set out here. They are also issued with IPSO contact details and a complaint form

Training procedures

Although no formal complaints training is given, all new recruits are told at their induction how to deal with complaints ie pass them to a senior member of the team.

Record on compliance

The County Press was referred to IPSO by two people during 2016.

[REDACTED] (IPSO ref. 14017-16) & [REDACTED] (IPSO ref. 14056-16)

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were the two complainants, both about an opinion piece written by our (then) weekly columnist, Charlotte Hofton, headlined [REDACTED]

The article was about [REDACTED] (2017). Both complainants said the article breached the Discrimination clause in the Code. However, the IPSO staff found it did not relate to an individual and therefore did not take the complaint forward.

To the best of my knowledge, these were the only complaints made against the IW County Press in 2016.

We did supply IPSO details to minor complainants to the paper but nobody else seems to have taken them forward.

Yours sincerely,



Alan Marriott
Editor, IW County Press